

I was told that you are the "parent" of the site iNaturalist.org, and I read your commitment to inclusivity and equality, and assume that iNaturalist.org, as a "child" of the Academy, is meant to be held to these same standards.

I came here to let you know that unfortunately, this is not so.

On the iNaturalist forums, there is one thread supposedly dedicated to LGBTQIA+ / Queer people, so that we have a place to discuss ourselves, issues, and other things like that, and receive support from our fellow iNaturalist users as well as the site moderators.

I recently revived the thread to talk about a negative experience I'd just had with another iNaturalist user, with the suggestion of the staff creating some basic ground rules about how /not/ to sexually harass trans people. I also shared a section from my iNaturalist profile where I go over my gender identity, pronouns, and orientation and define what the terms I am using mean.

I am nonbinary, and my pronouns are it/its.

Most people have responded positively and with polite, positive curiosity--

But two days ago (As of March 26th, 2023), an iNaturalist user left an inappropriate reply to my post, telling me that she refuses to use my pronouns, and will instead misgender me. She admits that this is wrong, but when multiple other trans people explain that this is not okay, she did not apologize, she simply doubled down and tried to turn it around to act like we're both wrong.

She is purposefully misgendering me, and the iNaturalist staff have unequivocally taken her side, despite the entire point of this thread being to support LGBTQIA+ and Queer people – including trans people like me.

I flagged her posts as inappropriate, but they are both still up.

Rather than removing her bigoted posts, the iNaturalist staff members and forum moderators who have reacted have so far done nothing to correct what is blatantly hateful behavior, instead choosing to tone police my and the other trans people's response – which is nothing but civil – as “too extreme” and “name calling” because I called the person who is /purposefully/ misgendering me transphobic, which is not an insult, it's literally just a statement of fact.

(Transphobic is synonymous with transphobia, but uses a suffix for

hatred rather than fear, as bigots do not fear us, they hate us, and people with actual anxiety-disorder phobias should not be thrown under the bus for something they can't control)

The iNaturalist staff members in question are so far tiwane, astra_the_dragon, and kueda.

Tiwane chose to tone police our response to the bigotry rather than simply state that misgendering will not be tolerated, and did not remove any of the bigoted posts where the other user is announcing that she's going to misgender me.

astra_the_dragon is also trans, but has chosen to “play both sides” and is also tone policing, saying that we should be responding in a “more chill” way to blatant and purposeful mistreatment. The only way any of our responses to the misgendering could be more chill is if we didn't say anything at all.

Kueda decided to lock the thread so that we can't use it anymore until the 30th, claiming that it's just too much effort for the iNaturalist staff to moderate it. Even though they're literally /not/ moderating it, because they've kept up both posts where I am being misgendered, and tiwane even personally left a heart on the second one!

And if tiwane had just been favoriting each post in the discussion as a way to promote discussing things, it would still be bad because it'd still be treating both sides as equal, but he literally only left a like on the bigoted post. Which is blatantly supporting the bigot over the victim.

Even after the iNaturalist staff put the thread in “slow mode” where we were forced to wait 30 minutes after one person posted to create a new post, they still allowed the user who was misgendering me to once again misgender me and double down on her argument. This second post is the one tiwane liked.

And they put the thread into “slow mode” after we'd already moved on from the “”negativity”” of defending me against misgendering, and were talking about positive things.

And then, after the second post misgendering me, which I responded to again explaining why it's bigoted, the conversation once again moved onto positive things, discussing the options in regards to pronouns and offering advice for how to go about choosing new ones when you weren't sure which ones you'd like to use.

The thread only became “too negative” when actively instigated by the transmisic user (and one other, whose obscenely transmisic,

exorsexist (bigoted against nonbinary people) and intersexist (bigoted against intersex people) was thankfully removed.) who were misgendering me.

And as soon as the requisite responses were made to this purposeful bigotry, we then moved on to discussing other things.

This was not, as the staff are acting, the entire thread being disrupted in a violent and overly aggressive riot.

It was trans people responding to blatant and purposeful transmisia and exorsexism, and then moving on to positive discussions.

The iNaturalist staff have chosen not to remove the two posts misgendering me, and have instead decided to first put the thread in slow mode even though we weren't talking about the “negativity” anymore, and then locked the entire thread, even though, once again, we were no longer “being too negative”.

The staff of iNaturalist claim to support trans people, but this incident has proven that statement completely false. It seems these members of the staff only support trans people when we sit idly by and allow ourselves to be the victims of hatred without complaint. They only support us if doing so requires no effort, and requires no

discipline of users who violate the community guidelines.

The forum moderators and staff at iNaturalist seem to believe that being purposefully misgendered is nothing more than a “difference of opinion” that I should not try to change, rather than hate speech.

They are showing me and all the other trans people on the forum that they believe calling bigotry what it is is actively worse than being bigoted in the first place.

They are showing that they would rather support and side with bigots over actually standing up for the victims of the bigotry.

They are showing us that they would rather punish all of us by locking us out of the entire thread, even though we'd already moved on to positive conversations, than remove two bigoted posts and say something as simple as “misgendering is bigoted and will not be tolerated here”.

They are showing that their so-called “support” and “welcome” of trans people only last so long as we are willing to be mistreated without complaint or comment.

I hope that as the “parent” company of iNaturalist.org, the Academy

will not only look into this incident, but do everything possible to make sure something like this doesn't happen again.

Especially in a thread specially dedicated to Queer people, I should not be subject to tone policing, silencing, and transmisia. The iNaturalist staff have a responsibility to protect their users from bigotry, but in this case, they have chosen to side with the bigots, even though the bigot literally admits she knows what she's doing is wrong.

Punishing all the people who were interacting positively with the thread over simply removing the bigoted posts is sending a very clear message that trans people like me are not actually welcome, and they're only saying that for show.

And it's not like the only responses to this situation have been negative – half a dozen other iNaturalist users either chose to defend me, or send me kind private messages afterward, asking how best to support me in the language they use. Several other people, including those who are not trans, went out of their way to defend me and correct the bigoted ideas being presented.

But the iNaturalist staff have all chosen to take the side of the bigot, either by explicitly supporting her (tiwane liking the second bigoted

post), or by tone policing and acting like we are out of control and out of line by responding to the bigotry.

The regular users of the site who have no power have chosen to stand up against the bigotry, but the staff members chose instead to punish us instead of doing their job and actually moderating the bigoted posts.

It is extremely cruel to lock the entire thread /after/ we'd already moved on. It literally just feels like we're being punished for standing up for ourselves. No one calling out the bigotry was being violent or aggressive or insulting, but the staff members have chosen to act like we were.

I hope I'm not just wasting my time by sending you this. I hope this message actually gets seen by a real person and not just discarded like junk.

I hope this incident can at the very least spark not only discussion of the failings, but actively change things for the better.

Assuming it is in the Academy's power as the “parent” of iNaturalist, I want the posts misgendering me to be removed for violating the community guidelines. I want an official apology from the

iNaturalist staff members involved (and those who have chosen not to get involved, because “not taking a side” is literally taking the side of the bigot) for failing to support the trans community and for tone policing our response to the bigotry.

I want iNaturalist.org to actually be welcoming to trans people in reality, not just as an empty promise that falls apart the moment a bigot makes a post where she literally admits she knows she's being a bigot.

Thank you for reading. I will be happy to continue this discussion if you are willing.

-Tinyel